

Architecture and Building:

An examination of the user's ability to sense the difference between the two situations, with special reference to commercial spaces

**The Dissertation Presented to the Department of Architecture,
University of Moratuwa,
Sri Lanka
for the Final Examination in M.Sc.(Architecture)
and RIBA Part II Examination**



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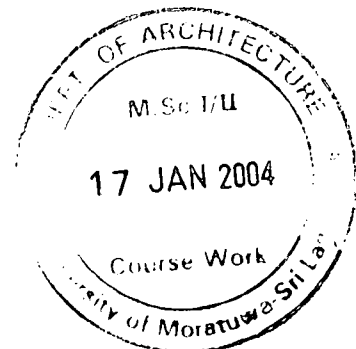
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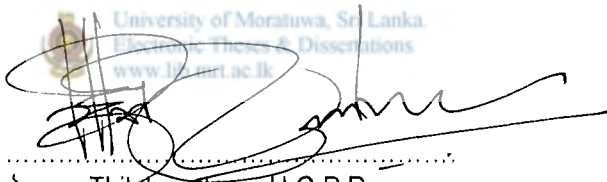


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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.


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ABSTRACT

The separation of architecture and buildings is not clearly visible. It is a qualitative attribute rather than a quantitative one. Habraken states architecture to be "process and product of human habitation." Hence, it is a spatial phenomena deeply bonded to the spatial existence of humans. But the prevalent social phenomena in the contemporary world is indicating a totalitarian destruction of the human civilisation. Humans are claimed to be increasingly insensitive to their built environment.

But, every human at an unconscious subliminal level is sensitive to their spatial existence. This sensitivity is not outwardly expressed and for that reason is not even understood by that person himself. If prompted, these sensitivities are expressed. But the general understanding however that is there is insensitivity to the built space.

This dissertation attempts to explain how a user senses and responds to physical and psychological attributes of the architecture of a building. It contains surveys done on several commercial buildings to assess how users feel physical attributes such as volume, size, scale, proportion, enclosure plane, colour, texture and lighting of the environment. Results of surveys are studied to identify how users sensed the psychological attributes such as belongingness, privacy, territoriality and identity.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Observation

The differentiation of architecture and buildings is not readily visible. It is a qualitative attribute rather than a quantitative one, and this does not allow for easy recognition of works of architecture among mere buildings by the general public. Almost always there seems to be a clear confusion as to what a work of architecture is and what how that is different from the buildings.

However, every human at an unconscious subliminal level is sensitive to their spatial existence. This sensitivity is not outwardly expressed and for that reason is not even understood by that person himself. If prompted, these sensitivities are expressed. But the general understanding however that there is insensitivity to the built space.

Criticality



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Art nurtures and nourishes the sensitivity of humans and in turn increases the sensitivity of the entire society. Architecture is an implemented art. It is called the "unavoidable art" and "mother of all arts".

General observations show that there is increasing insensitivity to the built environment. Instead of being emotionally uplifting built environments, human creations are increasingly becoming alien to their creators. There is increased urban crime in almost all cities, there is expressed hatred to the built environment, and there is a distinctive lack of emotion. These are dangerous symptoms of an even more dangerous disease: The lack of human emotions and sensitivity. This phenomenon needs exploration and it is necessary to see whether it is actually insensitivity of the humans that is the cause or is it something else.



Possible Causes

Several possible cause for this perceived insensitivity to architecture can be seen. Firstly it could be because the average human is actually insensitive to the built space diminishing the possibility of distinction between architecture and building.

Secondly, it could be that the average human is actually sensitive, but is unable to express it in spatial terms, to be understood by a fellow human.

Thirdly, it could be that they are sensitive to the built space, and are able to express it, but there is no real difference between architecture and building, or architects have been unable to create "architecture".

Hypothesis

This study takes the position that it is the second cause that could be the possible reason behind this phenomenon. Two facts point in the direction of this selection. Firstly, research into human environmental behavior and environmental psychology has proven that the human being is indeed sensitive to their built space. Secondly, there are groups of people that are able to recognize, study, and express in very distinctive terms what architecture is and, how it is different from buildings. This study will attempt to put this hypothesis on firmer grounds.

Intention of the study

The intention is to formulate a methodology and implement it to show that though unable to express, a layman is sensitive to the difference between architecture and building and that they have their own ways in which that sensitivity if prompted, could be recognized.

It will further attempt to establish the fact that if prompted, the expression of sensitivity to the built space is recognized and even understood. It will also establish the fact that the difference between architecture and building is of significant proportions and has wide spread implications.

Methodology

A user response survey will be adopted as the method of the study. In the first segment, it will adopt established principles to formalize that architecture and building could actually be separately identified. It will then show what the differences between architecture and building are.

In the second segment, it will proceed to show how humans sense their spatial existence. This will be established through studies into physical attributes of architecture, and architectural space, the psychological and physiological implications of the built space on the user.

The third segment will be in two phases. First phase will attempt to identify possible scientific research methods that could be adopted to do a research of this nature. It will further attempt to review those methods and then will select the most appropriate. It will also establish a methodology for the research, data collection and a format for data analysis and presentation.

In the second phase, two case study scenarios will be selected. Two generally accepted "works of architecture" will be compared against two "mere buildings". In each case, a standard questionnaire will be given to a selected sample of the general public, and a standard set of questions regarding the quality of the specific built space will be asked.

Based on the findings of these research, a series of analysis will be conducted to establish the hypothesis.

Scope and Limitations

In the first segment, only accepted, published studies into architecture and space will be analyzed to establish what architecture is. Similarly, defining building and architecture will use only accepted academic principles. In this regard too, the study will limit itself to available theories and research.

In the second segment, similar to that of first, the study into sensing architectural space will limit itself to accepted theories and research. Highlighting the significance of selected each.

In the third segment, the research method will be formulated only by reviewing the existing, established scientific research methods. There will be no attempt to formulate new methods. In selecting probable case studies, only public architecture will be considered. No residential architecture is studied due to the facts that uses of those spaces have special bonds to the dwelling allowing their comments to be influenced. Out of public buildings, only commercial establishments are selected due to its convenience in selecting examples that are similar in size, scale, function, location and other parameters which should not be different to the researched projects.

Only two case studies; two shopping malls against each other in Bambalapitiya, and two bakeries in Wellawatte will be used for the research considering practical limitations. Finally, it needs to be brought to light that an interview research of all users to a particular building is impossibility. Hence, it will not be attempted. A random sample of user will be selected to represent the larger, and only they will be interviewed.



In representation of the research findings, standard graphical presentation methods will be adopted to express the final outcome of the research.